

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15962

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, US, IT
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LEONE: DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLITICAL AFFAIRS

REF: ROME 15040

1. DURING THE COURSE OF MY OCTOBER 31 COURTESY CALL, PRESIDENT LEONE REVIEWED FOR ME SOME OF HIS CURRENT CONCERNS AND VIEW-POINTS ON DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AFFAIRS.
2. SPEAKING OF HIS RECENT ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED MESSAGE TO THE PARLIAMENT (REFTTEL), THE PRESIDENT SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE PHILOSOPHICAL CONCERNING THE PARLIAMENT'S REFUSAL TO DEBATE HIS VIEWS. TO HAVE DONE SO MIGHT HAVE BROUGHT ABOUT A GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS, WHICH HE DOES NOT WANT, DOES NOT FORESEE IN THE NEAR TERM, BUT WHICH HE BELIEVES LIKELY PRIOR TO THE NEXT NATIONAL ELECTIONS (MAY, 1977). HE DOES, HOWEVER, WANT TO JAR THE ITALIAN PEOPLE IN GENERAL AND HIS OWN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN PARTICULAR INTO REALIZATION THAT, IF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS TO BE SAVED, NOW IS THE TIME TO GET DOWN TO BRASS TACKS AND REALLY DO A JOB.
3. LEONE FELT THAT THE DC CONGRESS WOULD PROBABLY BE DELAYED UNTIL NEXT FEBRUARY OR MARCH BUT, PERSONALLY, WOULD PREFER IT SOONER IN ORDER TO GIVE THE POST-CONGRESS PARTY MAXIMUM TIME TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER FOR THE '76 AND '77 ELECTIONS. HE TAKES IT AS A GIVEN THAT DEFMIN FORLANI WILL BE THE NEXT PARTY SECRETARY.

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4. WHILE CURRENT PSI POSTURING CONTAINS A LARGE BARGAINING

ELEMENT, THE PARTY IS NEVERTHELESS NOT ACTING RESPONSIBLY. THE US SHOULD MAKE CLEAR TO DEMARTINO, DURING HIS EXPECTED US VISIT, THAT WE LOOK TO THE PSI TO PLAY A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE PRESERVATION OF DEMOCRACY IN ITALY. THE PSI CAN'T SUCCESSFULLY PLAY IT BOTH WAYS: YOU EITHER HAVE A DEMOCRACY IN ITALY OR YOU DON'T.

5. PRESIDENT LEONE ASKED THAT I TRANSMIT HIS FONDEST REGARDS AND WISHES TO PRESIDENT FORD AND THE SECRETARY. HE WANTS US TO KNOW THAT HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO MOSCOW STEMS FROM PERSISTENT SOVIET DEMAND TO RECIPROCATATE A LONG-AGO BREZHNEV VISIT TO ITALY. HE KNOWS THE SOVIETS ARE HOPING THE VISIT WILL END WITH SIGNATURE OF SOME SORT OF POLITICAL DOCUMENT, BUT HE WILL LIMIT THE OUT-COME TO SOMETHING LIKE A TERMINAL COMMUNIQUE.VOLPE

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